

## Newsletter Winter 2013

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# HEALTHY KIDS BETTER STUDENTS

**MASSACHUSETTS  
COORDINATED  
SCHOOL HEALTH PROGRAM**

**H**ello and welcome to the winter edition of the Coordinated School Health (CSH) newsletter. In each issue of our seasonal newsletters, we focus on one topic relating to school health concerns—including the latest research, success stories, and action steps for schools. This issue highlights the accomplishments Massachusetts has had in school wellness over the past several years.

If you have any questions about our program or need assistance implementing Coordinated School Health or Wellness Policies, please contact us.

Thanks, and have a healthy day!

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*A partnership of  
the Massachusetts  
Department of  
Elementary and  
Secondary Education  
and Massachusetts  
Department of Public  
Health.*

# 2012 Massachusetts School Wellness Award Winners

## Gold-level

Estabrook Elementary School,  
Lexington

## Bronze-level

South High Community School,  
Worcester

### Massachusetts Honors Healthy Schools

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and Massachusetts Department of Public Health (ESE, DPH) would like to congratulate the following recipients of the third annual Massachusetts School Wellness Award! These award-winning schools have shown a strong commitment to the health of their students and staff and we commend them for their outstanding achievement in:

#### School Health Policies • Health Education • Physical Education

#### Physical Activity • Nutrition • Staff Wellness • Tobacco Prevention

Both winning schools received a Massachusetts School Wellness Award banner which was presented at the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) and Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS) Annual Joint Conference on Nov. 7, 2012, in Hyannis. The schools were also awarded a wide range of materials to support their school wellness programs and activities.

For more information, contact Carol Goodenow, ESE Coordinated School Health Director ([cgoodenow@doe.mass.edu](mailto:cgoodenow@doe.mass.edu)), or Laura York, DPH Coordinated School Health Director ([Laura.York@state.ma.us](mailto:Laura.York@state.ma.us)).

### Program Highlights:

- Every May, the Estabrook Elementary School in Lexington hosts the “Run of the Mill 5K” and “Jim Banks Kids Fun Run.” The event promotes the idea of running together as a family and a school and attracts over 250 participants from the community. The Kids Run, where children ages 3 to 12 run laps at the school according to age, is held prior to the 5K and then everyone is invited to stay for a post-race picnic. Medals and items such as water bottles and headbands are provided by local vendors. On the following day, a large poster is hung in the school highlighting the Estabrook students and staff who ran. The race has also motivated many teachers to start taking weekly walks or runs together after school.
- South High Community School in Worcester conducts an annual Hunger Awareness Week where students learn about hunger in all classes. For instance, students read hunger literature in English class, use hunger statistics in math class and learn about the biological effects of hunger from visiting doctors and dieticians in science class. The school chorus and band also develop a melody of songs focused on helping each other and present the songs to faculty during a lunch prepared by South High food service students. During Hunger Awareness Week in 2010, students began discussing hunger in their own families and school staff realized the need to address this challenge for their students. The South High Food Pantry was started and continues to serve 85 students and their families weekly. Food for the pantry is donated by faculty and community agencies. Additionally, all grade 9 students plant and harvest vegetables at a local farm that grows food for local food pantries.

# Massachusetts Success Stories: School Wellness Accomplishments

It has been an exciting time for school wellness both nationally and in Massachusetts. Over the last few years, several significant pieces of legislation were passed to improve the school health environment so that all students can be ready to learn.

In 2009, the Massachusetts Public Health Council passed a regulation requiring public schools to measure the height and weight of students in grades 1, 4, 7 and 10, and to calculate students’ BMI (Body Mass Index). BMI is a screening tool used to help assess if a child has a healthy weight compared to other children of the same age and sex. These results are mailed or directly communicated to the parents or guardians of each student screened. The first year of data is now available in a newly released report, *The Status of Childhood Weight in Massachusetts 2011*. This report reflects only one year of state-wide data which, while not adequate to establish trends, forms a picture of current obesity rates necessary to track future changes. For more information, see [www.mass.gov/eohhs/provider/guidelines-resources/services-planning/school-health/school-health/school-health-screening.html](http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/provider/guidelines-resources/services-planning/school-health/school-health/school-health-screening.html).

After more than 10 years of community efforts, an *Act Relative to School Nutrition* passed in 2010. The act required the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to establish nutrition standards for competitive foods and beverages sold or provided in public schools during the school day. A 2012 amendment to the Act changed how the standards were applied, but there was no change in the standards defining what foods and beverages may be sold as à la carte items in the school cafeteria, school stores, school snack bars and vending machines. In addition to the nutrition standards, other food and beverage-related regulations mandated in the law included: making drinking water available to all students at no cost; selling fruits and vegetables at all locations where food is sold; making nutritional information avail-

able for all non-packaged competitive foods or beverages sold in the cafeteria (by August 2013); and preparing all competitive foods without using fryolators. The Department of Public Health created a comprehensive guidance document called *Healthy Students, Healthy Schools* to help school administrators, teachers, school nutrition service staff, school nurses, parents, students, booster clubs, PTAs/PTOs and others implement the Massachusetts School Nutrition Standards for Competitive Foods and Beverages. To view the guide, see [www.mass.gov/dph/healthierschools](http://www.mass.gov/dph/healthierschools).

The *Act Relative to School Nutrition* also contained a provision requiring “regulations facilitating the establishment of school wellness advisory committees.” These committees are intended to ensure that each public school district has an established group of school staff and community representatives to recommend, review, and help implement school district policies addressing school nutrition, nutrition education, physical activity, and related issues that affect student health. To optimize the effectiveness of these committees, the regulations stipulated several guidelines on how the committees should operate. To view the regulations, see [www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/regs/105cmr215-school-wellness.pdf](http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/regs/105cmr215-school-wellness.pdf)

An *Act Relative to Safety Regulations for School Athletic Programs*, passed in 2010, required that all public middle and high schools, and non-public schools that are members of the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA), have policies and procedures governing the prevention and management of sport-related head injuries. For more information, see [www.mass.gov/eohhs/consumer/wellness/injury-prevention/sports-related-concussions-and-head-injuries.html](http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/consumer/wellness/injury-prevention/sports-related-concussions-and-head-injuries.html).

An *Act Relative to Bullying in Schools*, which also passed in 2010, required school leaders to create and implement strategies to prevent bullying and to address bullying promptly and effectively when it occurs. This law also mandated training for



teachers and staff on prevention and intervention of bullying as well as instruction on heading off bullying for students in every grade level as part of the curriculum. For more information, see [www.doe.mass.edu/bullying](http://www.doe.mass.edu/bullying).

There has also been a great deal of activity relating to school wellness at the national level. *Let's Move!*, launched in 2010 by First Lady Michelle Obama, is a comprehensive initiative dedicated to solving the challenge of childhood obesity within a generation. This highly publicized campaign led to historic legislation which enabled the USDA, for the first time in over 30 years, to make substantive reforms to the National School Lunch and Breakfast programs. The *Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act* also strengthened local school wellness policies by emphasizing ongoing implementation and assessment; bringing in additional stakeholders in policy development, implementation and review; and requiring public updates for parents, students, and others in the community on the content and implementation of the policies. For more information on the Act, see [www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Legislation/CNR\\_2010.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Legislation/CNR_2010.htm) and [www.fns.usda.gov/tn/healthy/wellnesspolicy.html](http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/healthy/wellnesspolicy.html).

On the physical activity side, the President's Council on Fitness, Sports & Nutrition recently announced that it is replacing the President's Challenge Youth Fitness Test with the Presidential Youth Fitness Program. The new program will use Fitnessgram, an assessment that reports on a student's individual health and fitness. The

former test only measured how a student performed compared to his or her peers whereas the new assessment helps minimize comparisons between children and instead supports students as they pursue personal fitness goals for lifelong health. For more information, see [www.presidentialyouth-fitnessprogram.org](http://www.presidentialyouth-fitnessprogram.org).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently reviewed important research in the area of school wellness. *The Association Between School-Based Physical Activity, Including Physical Education, and Academic Performance* examined 50 studies on the links between school-based physical activity—including physical education—and academic success. The majority of the studies found that physical activity was positively related to academic performance, including academic achievement (grades, standardized test scores); academic behavior (on-task behavior, attendance); and factors that can positively influence academic achievement (concentration, attention, improved classroom behavior). Most importantly, adding time during the school day for physical activity did not appear to take away from academic performance. For more information, see [www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/health\\_and\\_academics/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/health_and_academics/index.htm).

Meanwhile, the report *Healthier Students are Better Learners: A Missing Link in School Reform to Close the Achievement Gap* reviewed research from more than 300 sources and reported that seven key health disparities impact student learning. Two of these disparities include not getting enough physical activity and skipping breakfast, both of which influence cognitive functioning. For more information, see [www.equitycampaign.org/i/a/document/12557\\_EquityMattersVol6\\_Web03082010.pdf](http://www.equitycampaign.org/i/a/document/12557_EquityMattersVol6_Web03082010.pdf).

Although childhood obesity rates are still high, all of these programs will enable schools to play a key role in contributing to the health and academic success of Massachusetts youth.



### Healthier Eating Among Massachusetts Youth: A Look at the Numbers

Although obesity and poor nutrition among children and adolescents are cause for concern across the country, recent evidence points to substantial improvements in healthy eating among Massachusetts youth in the past five or six years. Between 2007 and 2011, the percent of students who drink one or more glasses or cans of soda per day decreased significantly, from 25% to 18% among high school students and from 40% to 34% among middle school students. Also during that time span, the proportion of middle school students who ate three or more servings of vegetables rose from 14% to 21%. The proportion of high school students who report eating breakfast every day—a behavior significantly associated with better grades and lower obesity rates—has kept climbing steadily, from 32% (2003) to 35% (2007) and to 37% in 2011. In 2012, four of every five high school students (80%) reported having been taught in school how to choose healthy foods and eat a balanced, nutritious diet.



Changes in the school food environment help support this movement toward better nutrition. New meal pattern requirements from the U.S.

Department of Agriculture will increase fruits, vegetables, and whole grains in school meals. In Massachusetts, the percent of secondary schools in which students can purchase snack foods or beverages from vending machines or at a school store dropped sharply from 71% in 2006 to 64% in 2012. The decline in sales has been especially notable for popular junk foods such as candy (24% to 11%); salty, high-fat snacks (39% to 21%); and soda (19% to 12%). With the new Massachusetts competitive food regulations that took effect in August 2012, even these lower percentages will be reduced to zero.

Other new initiatives to promote good nutrition in schools should also contribute to healthier eating. With encouragement from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE), more than 200 schools across the commonwealth celebrated National Food Day on October 24 by hosting events aimed at promoting healthy local food. Also, outreach efforts from ESE, which have raised school breakfast participation among eligible students from 42% in 2007 to 48% in 2011, will be strengthened even further by the upcoming Massachusetts School Breakfast Challenge. This program aims to increase school breakfast participation by giving grants and awards to districts. Visit [www.MASchoolBreakfast.org](http://www.MASchoolBreakfast.org) for more information.

**4 out of 5**  
high school students  
were taught how to  
choose healthy foods  
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2012 school year.

## Coordinated School Health (CSH)

CSH is a joint initiative between the Massachusetts Departments of Elementary and Secondary Education and Public Health funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Division of Adolescent and School Health (CDC/DASH). Our team's primary goal is to improve school policies, environment and instruction relating to physical activity, nutrition and tobacco. Research shows that improvement in these areas not only contributes to the healthy development of students but to their academic success as well.

In order to accomplish these goals, we promote the Coordinated School Health model as an approach where all school health-related activities are integrated within the school and community in an effort to enhance the health and academic outcomes of students. This model provides a framework for creating linkages between nine existing components:

- Health Education • Physical Education • Health Services •
- Food and Nutrition Services • Counseling, Psychological and Social Services •
- Safe and Healthful School Environment • Health Promotion for Staff •
- Family/Community Involvement • Family and Consumer Sciences Education •

CSH staff provides training, technical assistance and resources to schools to promote the healthy development of Massachusetts youth. Additionally, CSH collects the biannual School Health Profiles surveys on health-related programs in Massachusetts middle and high schools, and works to increase coordination among state-level agencies and organizations working in school health. To learn more about CSH, please visit: [www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/CSHP](http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/CSHP).

## Are you on the list?

Every week, our program sends out a variety of school health-related resources and information such as new health research, professional development offerings and grant opportunities. If you are not on our listserv, please send an email to [CMilligan@doe.mass.edu](mailto:CMilligan@doe.mass.edu) and ask to be added. Also, if you have any school health dilemmas and would like input from other members, feel free to send your questions to the above email to be forwarded to the group.



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